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01/19/2011 09:22 AM

To <comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us>

cc

bcc

Subject Chattooga headwaters comments

To whom it may concern:

As an outdoor recreation professional as well as an avid kayaker, I am a strong proponent of allowing access to the headwaters of the Chattooga River to paddlers. The primary issue of a fishing-paddling user conflict does not exist in reality – users who fish utilize the stream at lower river levels, while paddlers will primarily frequent the waters at higher river levels. I have seen anti-paddling propaganda posted at local establishments in the Highlands-Cashiers area, which – I believe- has promulgated false notions such as the concepts of whitewater paddlers littering the stream, driving recklessly, inciting trouble, and essentially destroying pristine wilderness. The river is not only difficult for most recreational boaters to access, its rapids are also above the ability of the average (and above average) recreational kayaker or canoeist. The numerous species of salamanders endemic to the area are not in danger of becoming rare or extinct, as the amount and type of paddling would likely have little impact on the population. While the number of rare or endangered plants within the Chattooga Headwaters is significant, paddling would involve much less impact on plants in the stream or along the riparian zone than other activities currently allowed (i.e. fishing, hiking, backpacking, camping).

The Chattooga Conservancy claims that the Chattooga Headwaters are “the only place left in the region outside of Great Smoky Mountains National Park to have a wilderness experience.” However, GSMNP allows paddling in their park. (I personally have paddled sections of the Little River, the Middle Prong of the Little River, and Big Creek with NPS boundaries.) While GSMNP manages their park as wilderness, they do not forbid boating access, and paddling has not shown significant detriment to the park. Linville Gorge Wilderness, Shining Rock Wilderness, Gorges State Park, Citico Creek Wilderness, and Joyce Kilmer Wilderness are all areas with tracts managed as wilderness that permit paddling. Again, land managers of these areas have not deemed paddling to be detrimental or outlawed boating as the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River has on the Chattooga Headwaters.

Please consider allowing recreational paddling on the sections 00, 0, and 1 of the Chattooga.

Thank you for your time,
Jenna

Jenna Bales Walker

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Robert Farmer
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01/19/2011 03:09 PM

To Comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us

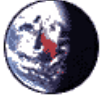
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Subject Chattooga Headwaters

I'm writing to support paddling on the Headwaters sections of the Chattooga River, a section that I plan to do someday. Specifically, I'd like to address the issue of impacts on the environment. I've paddled more than 150 rivers and creeks from Maine to Alabama, and I rarely even touch the shoreline on those many streams. When I do touch the shore, it is usually at a place where bare rock approaches the water, thus causing absolutely no environment impact. Certainly, as a boater, I create far less erosion than does a fisherman who walks long distances, often along the shoreline, to get to a fishing hole, because I usually walk on rocks, not on dirt. I rarely even encounter fishermen, because the rivers usually run only during the coldest and wettest times of the year when most people are warm and snug watching tv at home or something, and when I do see fishermen, they are about 95% friendly (maybe not in Georgia?), because they know that I'm not really scaring the fish to any significant extent, and I'll be gone in five seconds, anyway. Because flows suitable for boating are rare and unpredictable, and because opportunities for boating generally occur when no one else is using the rivers (i.e. in winter and during and after heavy rain storms), I feel that there should be no restrictions on small groups of whitewater kayakers, canoeists, and rafters. While some people may leave impacts due to camping, I know that boaters as a group leave far fewer impacts than do most people who use the woods, and I practice very-low impact camping, leaving virtually no trace of my passing, even fluffing up any flattened grass when I leave. There may be times when bivouacing on the river will be necessary due to a long section of river or due to adverse conditions, and low-impact bivouacs should be allowed when necessary; these usually are so remote that there is no virtually no chance of anyone other than a boater encountering them, anyway. During the many hundreds of boating trips that I have made, I doubt if I have encountered fishermen even a dozen times, and the majority of them have been not only nice but welcoming, so I just don't see how the fishermen in Georgia can be so hostile, angry, and generally antisocial that they can't share the river with a few boaters on those few days of the year when the water is high enough for good boating. I'm sure that the traffic on the upper sections of the Chattooga will never be comparable to the traffic that occurs on the lower sections and on the Tallulah, just downstream. When I did the Chauga, I never even saw anyone else on the river, and I'm sure that you didn't notice if I accidentally left a rock overturned, because my presence was unnoticeable after I left. Come on! We can share this river, and it will still be great!

Robert Farmer, 1807 Light St., Baltimore MD 21230 410-624-6421



Michael.Robson@ricoh-usa.com

01/19/2011 03:43 PM

To comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us

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Subject chattooga boat ban

Keep "wild and scenic" just the way it is. Lifting the boating ban will lead to the destruction of a beautiful place. Boats do not belong on this remote stretch, far too many injuries will occur.

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